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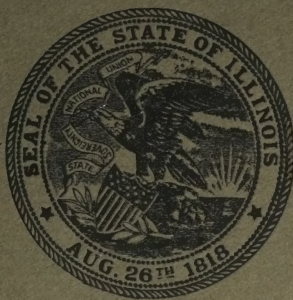
*To my friend Albert Tenfelle
With regards of William E. Barton*

THE ANCESTRY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AN ADDRESS

Delivered at the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of the
Illinois State Historical Society in the Cen-
tennial Memorial Building Spring-
field, Illinois, Friday, May 23,
1924

By WILLIAM E. BARTON



Reprinted from the Transactions of the Illinois State
Historical Society 1924

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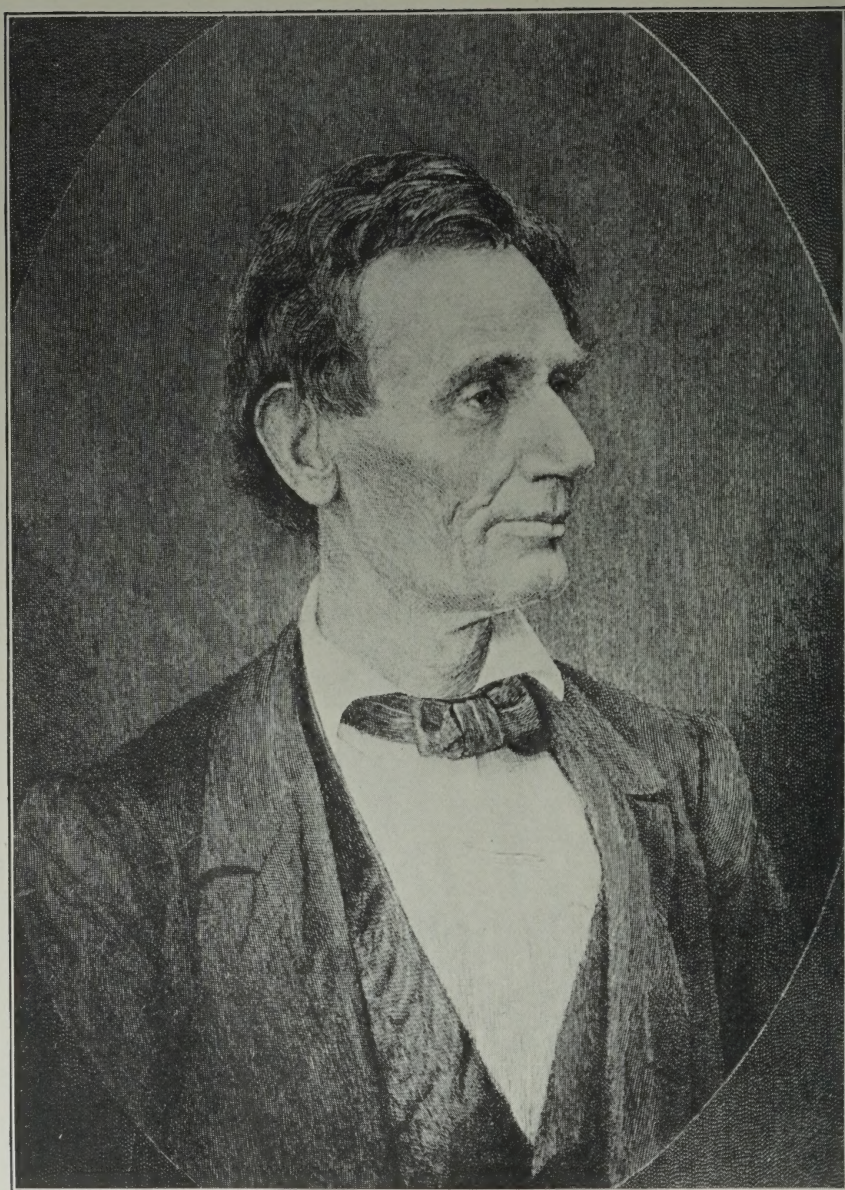
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN
(Hessler)

THE ANCESTRY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

BY WILLIAM E. BARTON.

There is no city in America or in the world where it is not an honor to speak on Abraham Lincoln, but there is no other city where the honor brings with it so sacred and intimate a sense of fitness as this city of Springfield. This city Lincoln may almost be said to have created; for his was the determinative influence that transferred the State Capitol hither from Vandalia. This city he chose as his home, and here he developed from a crude, country lawyer, without either library or practice, into the foremost political leader of this great Commonwealth. Here he found the atmosphere which stimulated his rising genius. Here he made the lasting friendships that shaped his destiny. Here he wooed and married Mary Todd. Here, as he reminded his neighbors, his children were born. Here his ashes lie entombed. Here if anywhere his spirit should abide. It is and must always be an honor to speak in Springfield concerning Abraham Lincoln.

It is an additional honor to speak in this noble building, erected to commemorate the centenary of this State, to house worthily the treasured memorials of her notable history, and to provide for the holding of meetings such as this.

It has been my privilege several times to speak on Lincoln in this city. I have spoken here on his life and character; on the qualities that made him famous and his influence imperishable; on the work he did for his country and mankind. I have spoken before this Society on the contribution of Illinois to the evolution of Lincoln's career.* All these are what may be termed popular subjects. They evoke immediate attention, and if they are adequately treated they are certain to be heard with interest.

But I speak tonight on a very different theme, and one which I may not hope to succeed in making entertaining. The subject which I have chosen cannot claim to be justified by widespread popular interest in it. The general public accepts Abraham Lincoln for what he was, and cares but little in comparison how he came to be the kind of man the world knows him to have been. To a very large degree, this attitude of the public is justified. What Abraham Lincoln was, is the subject of supreme significance; and how he came to be so is of lesser importance. Nevertheless, a Society such as this has as its purpose not only to preserve the body of known facts that already exist, but to add to the sum of human knowledge. A topic could lend itself to the graces of oratory would be more thrillingly interesting to the relatively small group of immediate hearers; but if a careful study of a subject such as this can by any possibility add to the knowledge of writers and speakers in future years, the audience instructed may be vastly multiplied.

* See Proceedings of the Illinois State Historical Society for 1921.

So I have chosen this theme for the sake of its permanent value rather than for its immediate appeal.

A recent writer has referred somewhat scornfully to attempts such as this to discover Lincoln's family history; it is rather anomalous, so this writer affirms, for present investigators to waste so much time and labor on a subject in which Abraham Lincoln himself took no interest whatever. But this oracular and satirical declaration would be more important if it were true.

Abraham Lincoln displayed a keen interest in the subject of his ancestry, together with what Herndon called a deep and significant reserve. There is some reason to think that the reserve was chiefly if not wholly with respect to his mother's side of the house, and that his chief interest was on his father's side. In the biographical sketches prepared by him in which there is any mention of his ancestry, he gives in extended detail the facts he had accumulated concerning the Lincoln family, while of his mother, he simply says that her name was Nancy Hanks, or that she was "of a family by the name of Hanks." As early as 1848, when Lincoln was in Congress, he answered an inquiry of Hon. Solomon Lincoln, of Hingham, Mass., giving him, in two letters, these facts:

"My father's name was Thomas—my grandfather's was Abraham, same as my own. My grandfather went from Rockingham County in Virginia, to Kentucky, about the year 1782, and two years afterwards* was killed by the Indians. We have a vague tradition, that my great-grandfather went from Pennsylvania to Virginia, and that he was a Quaker. Further than this, I never heard anything. It may do no harm to say that 'Abraham' and 'Mordecai' are common names in our family. * * * *

"I have mentioned that my grandfather's name was Abraham. He had, as I think I have heard, four brothers, Isaac, Jacob, Thomas and John. He had three sons, Mordecai, Josiah and Thomas, the last my father."*

In the same year he was in correspondence with David Lincoln of Virginia, and displayed a very active interest in all that he was able to learn of his ancestry.

The sketches which Lincoln prepared in December, 1859, for Jesse W. Fell and in May, 1860 for John Locke Scripps elaborate this material slightly as to his paternal descent and give very meager data concerning his mother, Nancy Hanks.

Since the death of President Lincoln, his lineage has been more industriously investigated than that, probably, of any other American. Hon. Samuel Shackford of Chicago contributed in an important measure to the tracing of his line from Massachusetts through New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Virginia. Various authors have contributed to our knowledge of the direct Lincoln line in America, and there has been one ambitious attempt to trace the line in England. In 1909, James Henry Lea, an American, and a relative of Lyman

* As we shall later discover, this date is not quite correct. His grandfather's death occurred in May, 1786.

* "Notes on the Lincoln Families of Massachusetts, with Some Account of the Family of Abraham Lincoln", by Solomon Lincoln. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* for October, 1865.

Trumbull, with whom in Mr. Lea's boyhood he had once met, at the close of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the future President, published a sumptuous volume entitled "The Ancestry of Lincoln."* Mr. Lea had associated with him as co-author, J. R. Hutchinson, an English genealogist, who traced the Lincoln family in England, and thought he demonstrated a connection with the line which established itself in Hingham, Massachusetts, before 1640.

This handsome volume carried conviction by the very beauty of its typography. It is stated by Hon. Waldo Lincoln that it now appears that the line breaks at the horizon, and the connection between the Lincolns in Old England and New England is yet to be established. But there is no doubt that the American Lincolns came from the county of Hingham, in Norwich, in England. As for the American genealogy, set forth by Lea and Hutchinson, it is high praise to say that it is not always wrong.

A more careful work appeared in the same year from the pen of Prof. Marion Dexter Learned of the University of Pennsylvania, entitled, "Abraham Lincoln: An American Migration", but it covered a limited field. It established its purpose of refuting a claim that the Lincolns were of Germanic extraction, and it furnished valuable material on the migration of the family, from New England, through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky, but it was not and did not undertake to be a complete genealogy.

In 1923, Mr. Waldo Lincoln, of Worcester, Massachusetts, President of the American Antiquarian Society, published his "History of the Lincoln Family". It is a volume of bulk and value. In a number of respects it is unsatisfactory, but taking it as a whole, it is far and away the best account we have of Abraham Lincoln's paternal line. On the maternal side, it leaves much to be desired. It does not follow Lea and Hutchinson in their attempt to trace the ancestral line across the ocean, but deals authoritatively with the American line, and may be said to complete the labor to which many investigators have contributed, and which Mr. Waldo Lincoln has brought to a successful issue. The main facts concerning President Lincoln's descent from Samuel Lincoln of Hingham, Massachusetts, were already fairly well established; but a few doubts have been resolved, and the following line will stand permanently as that which marks the descent of Abraham Lincoln from the parent Massachusetts stock:

I. SAMUEL LINCOLN was born in England in 1619*, and settled at Hingham, Mass., before 1640. He was a weaver. He died at Hingham, May 26, 1690, aged 71 years. His wife's name was Martha, and she died in Hingham April 10, 1693.

II. MORDECAI LINCOLN, son of Samuel and Martha Lincoln, was born at Hingham, Mass., June 14, 1657, and died at Scituate, Mass., November 28, 1727. He married (1) about 1685, Sarah,

* Published in 1909 by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

* This is the date of birth of Samuel Lincoln, as derived from his statement of his age at the time of his coming to America, and is consistent with the statement by his family as to his age at the time of his death. The Samuel Lincoln who was baptized at Hingham in Old England, August 24, 1622, would, if baptized immediately after birth, as was customary, have been nearly three years younger.

daughter of Abraham and Sarah (Whitman) Jones of Hull, and (2) Mrs. Mary (Hobart) Chapin, February 17, 1701-2. It is through Abraham Jones, apparently, that the name Abraham, so celebrated in the Lincoln family, became a Lincoln name.

III. MORDECAI LINCOLN, son of Mordecai and Sarah Lincoln, was born at Hingham, Mass., April 24, 1686, and died at Amity, Pennsylvania, May 12, 1736. He married first, Hanna Salter, daughter of Richard Salter, of Freehold, New Jersey. His second marriage was to Mary, thought to have been a daughter of Andrew Robeson, of Amity, Pennsylvania, and probably occurred in the summer of 1729. She died March 25, 1783.

IV. JOHN LINCOLN, son of Mordecai and Hannah Lincoln, was born at Freehold, New Jersey, May 3, 1716, and died on Linville Creek, Rockingham County, Virginia, in November, 1788. He married Mrs. Rebecca (Flowers) Morris. He is called "Virginia John" to distinguish him from a cousin.

V. ABRAHAM LINCOLN, son of John and Rebecca Lincoln, was born in Berks County, Pennsylvania, May 13, 1744, removed to Rockingham, then a part of Augusta County, where, in 1770, he married Bathsheba Herring, the mother of all his children. In 1780, he made his first visit to Kentucky, and removed to that state in 1782. He was killed by Indians, on his farm on Long Run of Floyd's Fork in Jefferson County, close to the Shelby County line, in May, 1786. His grave is probably within the enclosure of the Long Run Baptist church, which stands on land that belonged to him. His widow, Bathsheba, remained on Long Run until the following autumn, and later removed to Washington County, where her three sons and two daughters grew up. Her last years were spent with her younger daughter, Nancy Lincoln Brumfield, on Mill Creek, in Hardin County. She died in 1836, and is buried in the old Mill Creek cemetery.

VI. THOMAS LINCOLN, son of Abraham and Bathsheba Lincoln, was born in Linville Creek, in that part of Augusta County which is now Rockingham, Virginia, January 6, 1778. When he was four years old, his parents moved to Kentucky. At the age of eight, he witnessed the murder of his father. He married (1) in Washington County, Kentucky, June 12, 1806, Nancy Hanks, the mother of his three children. She was born in Virginia, in 1783 or 1784, and died in Spencer County, Indiana, October 5, 1818. He married (2) at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Mrs. Sarah Bush Johnston, daughter of Christopher Bush and widow of Daniel Johnston, whom she had married March 13, 1806, and who died in October, 1818. She was born in Kentucky, December 13, 1788, and died in Coles County, Illinois, December 10, 1869. Thomas Lincoln removed from Kentucky to Indiana in the autumn of 1816, and to Illinois in the spring of 1830. He died on his farm on Goose Nest Prairie, Coles County, Illinois, January 17, 1851, and is buried in the church-yard of Shiloh Church, near Janesville, Illinois. A monument to the memory of Thomas and Sarah Lincoln was dedicated in Shiloh Cemetery, one week ago today, Friday, May 16, 1924.

VII. ABRAHAM LINCOLN,* sixteenth President of the United States, was born on Nolin Creek, in that part of Hardin which is now Larue County, Kentucky, Sunday, February 12, 1809, and died at Washington, D. C., April 15, 1865. He married at Springfield, Illinois, November 4, 1842, Mary, daughter of Robert and Ann Eliza (Parker) Todd, of Lexington, Kentucky. She was born in Lexington, December 13, 1818, and died in Springfield, Illinois, July 16, 1882. They had four sons: Robert Todd, born August 1, 1843, and still living; Edward Baker, born March 10, 1846, and died in Springfield, February 1, 1850; William Wallace, born December 21, 1850, and died in the White House, February 20, 1862; and Thomas, or "Tad" born April 4, 1853, and died in Chicago at what was then numbered 372 Washington Boulevard, between Elizabeth and Ann Streets, July 15, 1871.

This completes the direct paternal line from Samuel Lincoln of Hingham, 1640, to the President himself. It was distinctively a Massachusetts family. Mr. Charles Z. Lincoln, in an address at Taunton, Mass., on July 12, 1906, declared that he had made careful search of the records of the Revolutionary War, and had found only six Revolutionary soldiers named Lincoln outside New England—one from New York, one from Pennsylvania, and three from New Jersey—and only fourteen from New England outside Massachusetts, while Massachusetts had to her credit 335 Revolutionary soldiers named Lincoln including, no doubt some re-enlistments.

While the name Lincoln was sometimes misspelled, as were all other names on the frontier, the Lincolns themselves did not misspell it; they never wrote it "Linkern" or "Linkhorn," though the neighbors sometimes spoke or wrote it so; the Lincolns wrote it "Lincoln."

The paternal line of Lincoln's ancestry is thus well established, but his maternal line is in worse confusion than it was twenty-five years ago. Meager at best was the material for an accurate history of the Hanks family. They kept no records. They duplicated names in constantly overlapping generations. They were highly migratory. It was difficult to find a basis for a consistent account of their wanderings and domestic relationships. Nicolay and Hay gave up all attempt to trace Lincoln's Hank's lineage back of his mother's mother, saying that in the tangle of cousinships it was practically impossible to trace a reliable connection.* Meager and unsatisfactory as this material was when they prepared their monumental work, it is vastly less satisfactory now; for what little wisdom then was on the subject has had accredited contribution of those who darkened counsel by words without knowledge.

* I am not discussing in this address the question of the legitimacy of Abraham Lincoln. That question I have fully considered in a volume entitled "The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln" published in 1920, by George H. Doran Co. of New York. The conclusions of that volume are assumed in this address, and need not here be repeated.

* Nicolay and Hay, who wrote with the knowledge and presumably with the approval of Robert T. Lincoln, stated in their notable biography of Lincoln that Abraham Lincoln's mother was Nancy Hanks, a daughter of Lucy Hanks. They affirmed that Lucy married Henry Sparrow, and that she had three sisters, Mary or Polly, who married Jesse Friend, Elizabeth who married Thomas Sparrow and Nancy who married Levi Hall. This statement ought to have stood without contradiction unless some one possessed facts that disapprove it; and no one did or does possess such facts.

Tonight I am recalling to life two women, who have been butchered by the biographers. The two whom I raise from artificial oblivion are Nancy Hanks, daughter of Joseph Hanks, and wife of Levi Hall, and her sister, Lucy Hanks, wife of Henry Sparrow. They shall live, for they deserve to live. But I must balance this life-giving act of mine with some bloodshed of my own. I must lead to the block three charming ladies, Mary Shipley Lincoln, wife of Abraham Lincoln the pioneer and mother of Thomas Lincoln, Lucy Shipley Berry, wife of Richard Berry—the “dear Aunt Lucy” of whom certain sentimental writers tell us—and Nancy Sparrow Friend, wife of Charles Friend and mother of Dennis Hanks. I must chop their heads off, one by one. They never existed. They were created out of less material than went to the making of Eve and have been shivering through the Lincoln literature of the last twenty-five years without a single fig-leaf of fact to cover the nakedness of their invention.

In 1899, Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock issued a little book entitled “Nancy Hanks: The Story of Abraham Lincoln’s Mother.” The lady announced that she had compiled a genealogy of the Hanks family, and that it was soon to be published, this little book being an advance publication of the essential facts so far as they related to the ancestry of Lincoln’s mother. Miss Ida M. Tarbell wrote the introduction, and declared that in this book Mrs. Hitchcock had “silenced forever the painful doubts” on this subject, and “deserved the gratitude of every admirer of Abraham Lincoln and lover of truth.”

This little book affirmed that Robert Shipley of Virginia had five daughters, Mary, who married Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the President; Lucy, who married Richard Berry; Sarah, who married Robert Mitchell; Elizabeth, who married Thomas Sparrow; and Nancy, who married Joseph Hanks. This Joseph Hanks, she declared, was the father of Nancy Hanks, the mother of the President, the parents of Abraham Lincoln thus being first cousins. In proof of this, she presented her one important document, the will of Joseph Hanks, of Nelson County, Kentucky, dated January 9, 1793, and probated May 14, 1793. This will named his wife, Nannie, to whom he left the life use of his property, four sons, Thomas, Joshua, William and Joseph, to each of whom he left a horse, and three daughters, Elizabeth, Polly and Nancy, to each of whom he left a heifer. The heifer, a yearling, left to his daughter Nancy was spotted, and bore the name Peidy. To his son Joseph, he bequeathed his farm of 150 acres, subject to the life use of his widow. His widow Nannie and his son William were appointed as executrix and executor of the will.

Mrs. Hitchcock appears to have been the first to find this will in the clerk’s office in Bardstown, where it may still be seen. For the discovery she deserves credit, though it is most unfortunate that the discovery was not made by a more discriminating authority. Mrs. Hitchcock asked herself whether this last named and presumably youngest daughter Nancy was not the mother of the president, and at once answered in the affirmative. The fact that almost every other Hanks family at that time contained a daughter Nancy did not prevent

her exalting her conjecture into a demonstration, and as such Miss Tarbell accepted it.*

One other document appeared to favor this theory. When Thomas Lincoln made application, June 10, 1806, for license to marry Nancy Hanks, a bond had to be given, and it was customary that the surety signing with the prospective bridegroom should be the father or other male relative of the bride. Where the bride had no father, almost any neighbor would assume a guardianship by courtesy; indeed, so complete a formality was the giving of the marriage bond that it does not appear that the Commonwealth of Kentucky has ever entered suit on a marriage bond. Almost any by-stander in a Kentucky court house will sign a marriage bond where the marriage is evidently one in good faith. But Mrs. Hitchcock saw in the "guardianship" of Richard Berry all that her theory lacked of complete proof. After the death of Joseph Hanks, so she declared as confidently as if it had been true, Nancy Hanks was adopted by her "kind Uncle Richard and dear Aunt Lucy Berry". She quoted the names and endearing adjectives as though she had some reason to suppose that Nancy Hanks had ever used them. As a matter of fact, "Kind Uncle Richard" had been dead a long time, and he was not her uncle; and "dear Aunt Lucy" was not her aunt and her name was not Lucy. The Richard Berry who, as a neighbor and friend of the Lincolns, signed Thomas Lincoln's bond, was the second Richard Berry, whose wife was Polly Ewing. His mother's name was not Lucy but Rachel.

Mrs. Hitchcock's theory encountered greater difficulties than this, however, and she was equal to them. She learned in some way who was the father of Dennis Hanks; and it is not easy to conjecture how she learned who his father was without learning also who his mother was; for Dennis Hanks himself, while admitting to William H. Hernndon that he was illegitimate, did not reveal the name of his father. His father's name was Charles Friend, a brother of the Jessie Friend who married Mary or Polly Hanks. Charles Friend was the father of more than one illegitimate son by more than one mother, and when he married it was not the mother of Dennis Hanks whom he married.* This was a fact not difficult to discover, but Mrs. Hitchcock conveniently failed to discover it. Instead she created a new mother for Dennis, thus getting rid of the necessity of acknowledging that Joseph Hanks had a daughter Nancy who had an illegitimate child, and who could not have been the mother of the President. As this process deprived Levi Hall of a wife, he was conveniently married to Elizabeth, another of the daughters of Joseph Hanks. That she had one husband already, Thomas Sparrow, did not greatly disturb this versatile authoress. Other difficulties were met in the same courageous fashion, and need not here be enumerated.

* Luke Hanks, who died in Abbeville County, S. C., in that part which is now Anderson, left a will dated May 21, 1789 and probated on October 7 of that year. He left all his property to his wife Ann. In 1822 Anderson was cut off into a new county. No one knows when Ann Hanks died.

In 1833, there was a friendly suit in partition, but it was not skillfully handled, and final settlement was in 1842. By that time there were 57 heirs of Luke and Ann Hanks, 27 of them non-resident. Among the 29 women were five Nanceys. This fact will illustrate the folly of jumping at a conclusion based on the practical assumption that there was but one Nancy Hanks. In almost any group of six Hanks girls there was likely to be one Nancy.

* Charles Friend married, November 19, 1804, not the imaginary Nancy Sparrow, nor Nancy Hanks, nor Nancy Riley, one of whom he might have been expected to marry, but Sarah Huss. Sarah was not one of the women who had him arrested for bastardy.

When in 1909, James Henry Lea, a native of Maine, and an admirer of Lincoln, having undertaken with the aid of J. R. Hutchins, his researches in Lincoln genealogy, he turned for assistance in the Hanks line to Mrs. Hitchcock, whose widely announced Hanks Genealogy had not appeared and has not yet appeared, though it is a full quarter century since she promised it.

Mr. Lea was evidently staggered by some of Mrs. Hitchcock's extravagances. She derived the name Hanks from the Egyptian "Ankh", meaning image, or as she preferred, soul. It was unfortunate for her that the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amon had not been discovered, for his middle name would surely have proclaimed him the progenitor of the Hanks family. Along the Roman roads into England with King Arthur, and from there to Plymouth Rock, and so on to Virginia and Kentucky, this regal family marched triumphantly in her manuscript. Mr. Lea saw at once that she had not established connection between the Massachusetts and Virginia Hankses, nor between those of Virginia and Kentucky, and he searched in vain, as others have searched before and since, for the five daughters of Robert Shipley, who, as he truthfully admits, "are not found in the Virginia records." But he had no other source of information concerning the Hankses, and so he adopted her theory with a few rather blundering modifications, though it made a sorry mix-up in his marriages, resulting in at least one case of bigamy.*

In order that this theory should stand, or appear to stand, it was necessary to dispose of the unanimous tradition of the Hanks family prior to 1899. A convenient way was found in attributing the tradition to Dennis, and then discrediting Dennis. Thus Mr. Lea tells us that "Charles Friend married Nancy Sparrow, daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Shipley Sparrow, and had a son, Dennis Friend, whose subsequent assumption of the name of Hanks has greatly increased the confusion in the Hanks pedigree". (P. 122). The only true statement in that sentence is that Charles Friend was the father of Dennis Hanks. But Charles Friend did not marry the mother of Dennis, and that mother was not Nancy Sparrow, and Thomas Sparrow did not marry Elizabeth Shipley, and he had no daughter Nancy, and Dennis Hanks was always called Hanks, and did not subsequently assume that name, and his truthful story of his own mother and her family did not increase the popular confusion in the Hanks pedigree. Miss Tarbell in her last book, "In the Footsteps of the Lincolns", clings though with rather a numb grip to this fantastic story: "However grateful we may be to Dennis for the color and liveliness which he has imparted to an important segment of the Lincoln story" she says, "a segment of which he knew much, he cannot be taken seriously as a genealogist." (p. 87). He not only can be taken seriously, but he must be so taken. All that we need to claim for Dennis as a genealogist is that he was able to distinguish between his mother and his female cousin of the same name.

* Compare pages 122 and 128 and behold the situation which he makes in his attempt to mix fact and Mrs. Hitchcock—thereby marrying Elizabeth Hanks simultaneously to two men, against all the statutes in such case made and provided.

Miss Tarbell is not to be charged with any responsibility for the falsehoods in Mrs. Hitchcock's theory, nor do I charge Mrs. Hitchcock with them. Mrs. Hitchcock had assistance, and how much of the misinformation came to her ready-made I do not undertake to determine. But her theory as it stands wrought out in the sumptuous volume of Lea and Hutchinson is not an innocent wrong guess as to the identity of one of the many women named Nancy Hanks. Some one, working over this material, deliberately falsified it. I do not think it was Mrs. Hitchcock. But she has published a most superficial and misleading book, untrustworthy in its substantial parts. As for Lea and Hutchinson, who evidently wrought in good faith, and whose book carries conviction by the very beauty of its page, they simply must not be trusted in that part of the book derived from Mrs. Hitchcock. Miss Tarbell has stood sponsor for a theory which she was glad to believe, and unfeignedly did believe. She ought to have been more careful.

According to the will of Joseph Hanks he had a wife, Nannie, five sons, Thomas, William, Joshua, Charles and Joseph, and three daughters who are named Elizabeth, Mary or Polly, and Nancy. According to the Hanks tradition, their immigrant ancestor had five sons, Thomas, William, Joshua, Charles and Joseph, and four daughters, Lucy, Elizabeth, Mary or Polly and Nancy. Were there in the same county and same general neighborhood two men named Joseph Hanks with families so nearly identical? Certainly not; especially since in each the daughter Polly married Jesse Friend and the son William married Elizabeth Hall and they became the parents of John Hanks who split rails with Abraham Lincoln. We deal with one family, and not two.

What then about Lucy? The lame reply of those who hold the Hitchcock tradition is that there was no Lucy, daughter of Joseph Hanks, but a "dear Aunt Lucy", wife of Richard Berry. The answer is that neither of those statements is true. There was no "dear Aunt Lucy Berry" and there was a daughter Lucy Hanks.

Why did not Joseph Hanks remember her in his will?

He remembered her, to his sorrow, and in his wrath he disinherited her.

Nancy Hanks, the mother of the President, did not inherit the spotted heifer; she was the innocent reason why her mother Lucy did not receive a heifer.

But was the moral standard of the Hanks family so high that Joseph Hanks cherished his wrath nine years after the birth of his little granddaughter, and cut off his daughter Lucy without a penny for no other reason than that one youthful indiscretion? No; the moral standard of the Hanks family was not so high as that, and no family's standard ought to be of that sort; but unfortunately we know all too well that Joseph Hanks had later and very strong provocation, and that his disinheritance of Lucy was no inadvertance. Lucy has caused him great sorrow, both in Virginia and in Kentucky. At the time of her father's death she was married and living a respectable life, but he died without granting her forgiveness.

With the sons of Joseph Hanks we have little concern. Joseph, who inherited the farm on the death of his mother, sold his interest

to his brother William and returned to Virginia. A few years later he returned and located in Elizabethtown, working at the carpenter's trade. At the same trade worked Thomas Lincoln, and it may have been through this uncle that Thomas Lincoln came to know Nancy Hanks. They met and they loved each other and in due time married. William traded the Hanks farm—which was on Rolling Fork, two miles above the mouth of Pottingics Creek, for land in Grayson County. There, near the Falls of Rough Creek, were born his children, including John Hanks, who later split rails in Macon County, Illinois, with Abraham Lincoln. The other sons do not concern us. We are concerned, however, with the daughters, of only one of whom, hitherto, has there been indisputable record.

Mary, or Polly, Hanks was married December 10, 1795 to Jesse Friend, at Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Her brother, William signed her bond as "guardian," and he signed with a mark.

Nancy, named in the will, was not the President's mother, but her aunt. She married Levi Hall, after first having loved and been deserted by Charles Friend, a brother of Jesse Friend, the husband of her sister Polly. Charles Friend was given to this sort of adventure, and Nancy Hanks was not the only woman who knew him to her sorrow. But he married Sarah Huss, and is buried in the Little Mount Baptist Cemetery, near the church to which Thomas and Nancy Lincoln belonged.

This is the true story of the Hanks sisters as related by Dennis Hanks; I read it from his own unpublished manuscript:*

"Dennis F. Hanks was born in Hardin County on the tributary branch of the South Fork of Nolin on the old Richard Creal farm in the old peach orchard in a Log Cabin 3 miles from Hogins Ville. Thence we moved to Mercer County and staid there a Bout 3 years and moved Back again to the Same place and then Remained untill we moved to Spencer County Indiana this was I think in the year 1816 if my memory serves me Rite. My mother and Abe's mother's mother were sisters. My mother's name was Nancy Hanks. Abe's grandmother was Lucy Hanks, which was my mother's sister. The woman that raised me was Elizabeth Sparrow, the sister of Lucy and Nancy. The other sister hir name was polly Friend. So you see there was 4 sisters that was Hankses."

The Hall brothers, sons of Levi Hall and Nancy his wife, confirm this statement, which all the Hankses believed prior to 1899. This, too, is confirmed in affidavits which I have from the Friend family.

Yet all this has been discredited hitherto by Mrs. Hitchcock and her followers, who affirm that there was no other Nancy than the President's mother, and no Lucy, and that Elizabeth and not Nancy married Levi Hall.

I now bring a wholly new set of traditions and family records to the permanent settlement of this controversy. In addition to the testimony of the Hankses, Halls and Friends, I have the testimony and records of the Sparrow family. I am happy to announce that since the delivery of this address, I have been able to continue these studies and

* In the Library of the University of Chicago.

have brought them to a conclusion so far the Hanks genealogy is concerned. The lineage of the Hanks family is now established from before the year 1700 to the birth of Abraham Lincoln. This will appear early in 1925 in my "Life of Abraham Lincoln" in two volumes, to be published by Bobbs Merrill Company of Indianapolis. The conclusions announced in this address are fully sustained by these later discoveries.

I am much indebted to State Historical Societies, including this one. This is a good place for me to thank Mrs. Weber and Miss Osborne and their assistants for many kindnesses. Other societies, also, have assisted me. I was working one day in the Library of the Kentucky Society when Mrs. Cannon, the librarian, called my attention to an item in a current Frankfort paper concerning a visitor to the State Capitol on the previous day. He wanted to see the statue of Abraham Lincoln: he said he was a cousin of Lincoln's, and gave the name of the county from which he came, and his own name as Sparrow.

I followed up this clue.

There is in Kentucky a county adjoining Mercer, which in former years sometimes returned a small Republican majority, while Mercer had more Democrats than she needed. A far-sighted Legislature, desiring to make two Democratic counties to grow where formerly there was one, made what is known as "the cut-off," transferring a slice from one county to another, with the happy result that ever since, both counties have been safely Democratic. In "the cut-off" I found the Sparrows.*

The name Sparrow is not infrequent in Colonial history. It is found early in several sections of Virginia. One Captain Charles Sparrow was in the house of Burgesses in 1645, 1648, 1652, 1659-60 from Charles City district.† The families in which we are especially interested are found before the Revolution in Mecklenburg and Halifax, two adjacent counties in the south tier, adjoining the North Carolina line, and near the middle of that line between the states. The Census of 1790 shows Thomas Sparrow to have been a resident of Halifax County in 1782 and 1785, having in 1782 a family of six persons, all white in one dwelling and in 1785 a family of seven. In the same two years the family of John Sparrow was resident in the same county, having a family of seven in one dwelling.

The family whom we seek especially, however, is that of one James Sparrow, who was resident of Mecklenburg County as early as 1765, for there was born his eldest son Henry, October 9, 1765. The Census of 1790 gives us as resident in that county a James B. Sparrow with a family of eight and a James R. Sparrow with a family of 10, all white, in 1782.

The tax-lists of Mecklenburg County, Virginia begin in 1782. In 1783 we have James Sparrow taxed with one slave, 2 horses and 2 head of cattle, and Bolling Sparrow with one slave and 2 head of cattle. In 1784 we have James W. Sparrow taxed with 5 horses and 12 cattle; and we find James R. Sparrow paying for Henry, Thomas and James

* I am indebted for invaluable assistance to the Misses Mary A. and Martha Stephenson of Harrodsburg, Rev. Louis A. Warren of Morganfield, and Hon. William H. Townsend of Lexington.

† Stanard, Register of Colonial Virginia, pp. 65, 67, etc.

Sparrow, presumably his sons. In the same year we have Bolen Sparrow taxed with one horse and two head of cattle and Bolling Sparrow taxed with three slaves, 5 horses and 14 cattle. I infer that James R. Sparrow and James W. Sparrow are one and the same, the middle name of James W. being Wright, sometimes spelled with the initial R. In 1785 James Bolling Sparrow has three horses and 14 cattle. In 1787 James Sparrow has 190 acres of land and James Bowling Sparrow 50 acres of land. In 1788 James Sparrow is recorded as having "no land" and the same entry appears opposite the name of James Bolling Sparrow. After 1788 the name Sparrow disappears from the Mecklenburg County tax lists.

My inference is that there were two James Sparrows, first cousins, one of them James Bowling Sparrow and the other, James Wright Sparrow, who seldom used his middle name except to distinguish him from his cousin. James Wright Sparrow and James Bowling Sparrow removed to Mercer County, Kentucky, probably in 1788. He was the father of the Sparrows in whom we are especially interested, as is shown by his paying in 1784 for Henry, Thomas and James Sparrow.

James Wright Sparrow died in Mercer County, Kentucky, in 1789. His will, is of record thus:

"The noncupative will of James Sparrow, Decd., was produced in Court, Oct. 27, 1789, in the words and figures following:

"In the name of God, Amen, I James Sparrow of Mercer County, Caintucky, and province of Virginia, being of perfect mind and memory, do make this my last Will and Testament and dispose of what little affects God has blessed me with in Mercer following, that is to say lawful Debts to be paid faithfully discharged out of my personal eEstate to my well beloved wife. I leave the rest of my personal estate to rease the childering and support herself and my land is to be divided first One hundred for my eldest son hendry, then the other three hundred to be divided equally to the other fore sons, Thomas, James, Peter and Dinny Sparrow. This is my last will and Testament here given under my hand this 18th day of May, 1789.

"And the same was proved by the oaths of Josiah Campbell, Henry Sparrow, and Judith Sparrow and Susannah Campbell to be the non-cupative will of the said James Sparrow Deceased and ordered to be recorded."

His "well beloved wife" is not named in the will, but we know that her name was Mary.

Was the deceased James R. Sparrow or James B. Sparrow? Quite certainly he was the former. His family was of the right size to have been that of James B. Sparrow, for in addition to his five sons named, we know that there was a daughter, Bridget or Biddy, making a family of eight. He was not James B. Sparrow, for that man still lived. The family of ten of which we have record in Virginia in 1782 might have been reduced by the death of two children, or by the marriage of two daughters in Virginia, or by one marriage and one death. The other family of eight is large enough for any demands which we have thus far discovered in the Mercer County records. We may assure ourselves that the James Sparrow who died in 1789 in Mercer County was James W. or James R. Sparrow, formerly of Mecklenburg County,

Virginia, where we know that the parents of Henry Sparrow were living when he was born in 1765, and where he was living when he enlisted in the Revolutionary War in the spring of 1781. He was 24 years of age when his father died, and, as the will affirms, he was the eldest son. If there were additional daughters, one or two, older, or a few years younger, they might have married in Virginia. As for the six children we shall have something to say, especially concerning Henry, the eldest son. On his father's death, Henry became the head of the family, and when Biddy, or Bridget, was married, by Rev. John Baily, March 5, 1790, (bond March 2, 1790) Henry signed as "Guardian." His mother's name, we are quite certain, was Mary, and she lived for some years after the death of her husband.

With the other James Sparrow, James B., we have less concern, and regarding him we have just enough information to make our search difficult. His middle name was Bowling, a name spelled Bollin, Bolin, and otherwise. With a James Bowling Sparrow, and a James Bolling, and with more than one James Sparrow, and with much carelessness in recording names of peoples who could not write them, we should be forgiven if we make mistakes, but we desire to avoid them if we can.

One of the witnesses to the will of James Sparrow, was Judith Sparrow. We have no account of any such member of his immediate family, and we do not find her marriage later. We may conjecture that she was the wife of James B. Sparrow.

James Bowling Sparrow appears to have had a daughter, Rebecca Bowling Sparrow, who married Peter Sparrow, son of the deceased James or James R., the bond of August 6, 1798, having besides Peter the bond as surety of James B. Sparrow. It must be understood that to all these documents the Sparrows and the Bowlings make their marks. It is, however, a strange coincidence, that when, on November 19, 1800, Peter appears for a second marriage, this time to Milly Edwards, his bondsman is James Bowling.*

James Bowling married Nancy Ellcock, October 19, 1794, his bondsman being Thomas Sparrow. A James Bowling, probably a son, bought land on Doctor's Fork November 10, 1836, and he and his wife Caroline sold land, March 21, 1837.

But if the older James Bowling had been the younger James Sparrow, and had married Nancy Ellcock, we should think we were on safe ground; for Nancy Sparrow, widow, married Richard Elliott, according to the return of Rev. W. W. Hayes, in Nelson County, May 28, 1800. And it would seem that the younger James Sparrow, son of James W. Sparrow, had died, for we miss him out of the family about that time, and some years later when his surviving brothers and sisters make a deposition and swear that they are the only surviving members of the family, there is no James among them. It appears, therefore, that the wife of the younger James Sparrow, as well as the wife of James Bowling, was a Nancy.

So far as we are able to judge, therefore, the documents are to be accepted as showing that there were among the pioneers to Mercer

* The repetition and similarities and variations of these names will illustrate the difficulty of such an investigation as this, where records are fragmentary and not well kept.

County, Kentucky, about 1788, a James W. or James R. Sparrow, who in his will is called James Sparrow, and whose middle initial for the name Wright is used only when necessary to distinguish him from his relative, James B. Sparrow, and a James Bowling Sparrow, who apparently had a son named for himself, and also a James Bowling who was a relative but not a Sparrow.

Our need of the original James B. Sparrow is slight. We have a Judith Sparrow to account for, and we may conjecture that she was his wife, for we are sure that he had a wife. We find Rebecca Bowling Sparrow, and have little doubt that she was his daughter. This family came from the same county with the Berrys and was in some way related to them. John Berry died in 1795. He left to his beloved wife, Anne, certain personal property, and the profits of 200 acres of land. In a codicil he provided that of the land devised to his wife, 50 acres should be "for the use of James B. Sparrow, his life-time and his wife's." This may be taken to imply that James B. Sparrow and his wife, Judith, were aged people in 1795, and that John Berry made provisions thus for these relatives of his own or his wife's, assuming them to have been such.

With this preliminary survey of the Sparrows in Mercer County about the year 1790, we turn to the family that is of immediate concern to us, the children of James or James R. Sparrow, late of Mecklenburg County, Virginia, whose will in Mercer County, Kentucky, was proved October 27, 1789.

He had five sons and one daughter. The son James died, we know not when. He was probably the husband of the widow Nancy Sparrow who married John Elliott in 1800. His death and her marriage take them out of our line of investigation. The surviving children were the four sons, Henry, Thomas, Peter and Dennis, and the daughter Bridget or Biddy.

We now are able to shorten our story. Thomas and Henry Sparrow rode to the Court House in Harrodsburg on October 17, 1796, and gave bond for the marriage of Thomas to Elizabeth Hanks. Their marriage bond has recently been discovered and for the first time.

But previous to this, Henry Sparrow had ridden thither on his own account accompanied by his brother-in-law, John Daniel, Biddy's husband, and swore out a marriage license for Henry Sparrow to marry Lucy Hanks. Lucy had no guardian. John Daniel certified that she was of age, and she herself, being the only one in either family who could write, left this little document:

"I do certify that I am of age and give my approbation freely for Henry Sparrow to git out Lisons this day or any other day. Given under my hand this day, April 26th, 1790.

"Lucey Hanks".

"Attest—

"Robert Mitchell"

"John Berry".

They were not married, however, for nearly a year. On April 3, 1791, Rev. John Bailey, a Baptist preacher, married them; and it is literally true that they lived happily ever afterward. She lived vir-

tuously and well, and brought up her large family in honesty and piety, two of her sons, James and Henry, being ministers of the Gospel.

Her descendants are innumerable, and they are honest, law-abiding, God-fearing people. Most of them voted in 1860 and 1864 for their kinsman, Abraham Lincoln, and several of them who served in the Union Army lie buried in graves that are decorated annually on Memorial Day in the old Sparrow Union Cemetery, near the church where Rev. Henry Sparrow, son of Henry and Lucy, and half-uncle of Abraham Lincoln, preached and prayed for the Union all through the Civil War, and where he and his faithful wife Ailsy lie buried.

The Hanks family was not the illustrious clan of super-royal lineage described by Mrs. Hitchcock. It was a commonplace family, migratory and illiterate, an "undistinguished or second family" as Abraham Lincoln said. But it was not a vicious family. It had practically no criminal record; and cases of sexual irregularity, while not unknown in it, were the exception and not the rule. Moreover, such irregularities did not permanently continue in the lives of those members of the family who occasionally displayed the weakness of human flesh in this regard. The family was not an occasion of pride to Lincoln, but if he had known all that we know—and we know much more about its history than he knew—he need not have felt it a disgrace. It was a decent, humble, honest clan, with no marked abnormalities. It was a family neither of drunkards nor degenerates. It was not degraded; it simply was not graded up.

It was a religious family—of the emotional type well known on the frontier. That religion, for its time and need, is lightly spoken of only by those who view it from the outside without intimate knowledge of frontier conditions. The Hankses, like the Sparrows, Friends and Lincolns, were old-school Baptists;* but in later generations they became more diversified in their denominational adherence.

In this address I am making unblushing use of material furnished by Dennis Hanks. He was the most given to writing of any Hanks of his generation, and a considerable number of his letters are preserved, chiefly through the industry of William H. Herndon. Dennis was born May 15, 1799, as he tells us in a document already cited. He died at Paris, Illinois, October 21, 1892. Dennis was given to a cheerful egotism, and loved to exaggerate his own influence in shaping the career of Lincoln. In one matter, when he believed the honor of one of the Hanks sisters to be involved, he lied like a gentleman. But for the most part Dennis was remarkably consistent, and his biographical notes are in the main reliable.

I have in my hand an autobiographical letter of his, furnished me by his grandson, J. D. Shoaff, of Paris, Illinois. In this letter Dennis has this to say of Lucy Hanks Sparrow:

"Abe was a very good Boy and an honest man. So was his father, Thomas Lincoln before him. His mother's mother Belong to the Baptist Church, a Christian Lady in every Respect."

* I refer to my "The Soul of Abraham Lincoln" published in 1920, by George H. Doran Company of New York, for discussion of the religion of the frontier.

It remains to say a word about Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow. They assumed the care of their unfortunate nephew, Dennis, and their niece Nancy. When the latter married Thomas Lincoln and moved to Nolin Creek, they were near her: and Elizabeth was almost certainly present when Abraham Lincoln was born. They followed her to Indiana, and were to her as parents. The neighbors who knew them in life and buried them when they died never doubted that Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow were in fact her father and mother.*

To that same neighborhood removed also Levi Hall and Nancy his wife. They arrived in time to be stricken with the same fatal malady that carried off Nancy Hanks Lincoln and her foster parents. They five all died within a few days of each other.

It is to Dennis Hanks we owe the evidence that enabled historians to mark the grave of the President's mother. He described the place of burial and said, that, while other graves were near at hand, these five were a little apart, and all in one group. It was found as he said, and the grave of Nancy Hanks was duly identified and appropriately marked.

Experienced grave diggers say that when a grave has been dug it is never possible to fill it in such a manner as to conceal the fact that it is a grave. In laying out the walks and improving the grounds it became necessary to dig away the surface soil, and the five graves are there. The five dead who sleep in that picturesque spot, now a State Park, are Levi and Nancy Hanks Hall; Thomas and Elizabeth Hanks Sparrow; and Nancy Hanks Lincoln.

Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow had no children of their own. After their death, Dennis Hanks returned from Indiana to Kentucky and entered suit for their land, claiming to be their heir-at-law. His claim was settled out of court. After some years the Sparrow brothers, Henry, Peter and Dennis, and their sister Biddy, who then was married to her second husband Joseph Painter, entered suit, and in their affidavits testified that Thomas and Elizabeth never had any children of their own.

Providence left them childless that they might nourish as their own their nephew, Dennis, and their niece, Nancy. To their devoted care the world owes something of the character which Nancy Hanks transmitted to her son, Abraham Lincoln.

Thomas and Elizabeth Sparrow, who took and reared as their own daughter their little niece Nancy Hanks, who obtained for her a better education than they themselves possessed, and who followed her with affectionate and parental intent all her life, were faithful unto death.

* On this point see Herndon and also Nicolay and Hay.

